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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - LEBANON

¶1. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Lebanon due to current safety and security concerns. Americans living and working in Lebanon should understand that they accept risks in remaining and should carefully consider those risks. This supersedes the Travel Warning issued on May 13, 2009 and updates information on security threats and special circumstances in Lebanon.

¶2. While Lebanon enjoys periods of relative calm, the potential for a spontaneous upsurge in violence is real. Lebanese government authorities are not able to guarantee protection for citizens or visitors to the country should violence erupt suddenly. Access to borders and ports can be interrupted with little or no warning. Public demonstrations occur frequently. Under such circumstances, the ability of U.S. government personnel to

reach travelers or provide emergency services may at times be severely limited.

¶3. Americans have been the targets of numerous terrorist attacks in Lebanon in the past, and the threat of anti-Western terrorist activity continues to exist in Lebanon. On January 15, 2008, a U.S. Embassy vehicle was targeted in a bomb attack that killed three Lebanese bystanders. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Lebanon despite this Travel Warning should keep a low profile, varying times and routes for all required travel. Americans should also pay close attention to their personal security at locations where Westerners are generally known to congregate, and should avoid demonstrations and large gatherings.

¶4. On May 7, 2008, Hizballah militants blocked the road to

Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut. The action rendered the airport inaccessible and travelers were unable to enter or leave the country via commercial air carriers. Armed Hizballah and other opposition members proceeded to enter areas of Lebanon not traditionally under their control, resulting in heavy fighting and a number of casualties. Full access to the airport was restored on May 21, 2008, when hostilities subsided. Access to the airport is considered vulnerable and could be cut off with little warning in the event of new hostilities.

¶15. Rocket attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel continue to occur, most recently on September 11, 2009. These attacks frequently provoke a military response from Israel. The rocket attacks and responses occur with no warning.

¶16. Landmines and unexploded ordnance continually pose significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of the country where civil war fighting was intense. More than 40 civilians have been killed and more than 300 injured by unexploded ordnance remaining from the armed

conflict in July-August 2006. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

¶17. U.S. citizens traveling or resident in Lebanon despite this Travel Warning should be aware that the U.S. Embassy's ability to reach all areas of Lebanon is limited. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees will be able to render assistance to U.S. citizens in many areas of the country.

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¶18. In the event that the security climate in the country worsens, Americans should be aware that they will bear the responsibility of arranging their own travel out of Lebanon. Americans with special medical or other needs should be aware of the risks of remaining given their condition, and should be prepared to seek treatment in Lebanon if they cannot arrange for travel out of the country.

¶19. U.S. government-facilitated evacuations, such as the evacuation that took place from Lebanon in 2006, occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Evacuation assistance is provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. government for travel costs. The lack of a current U.S. passport will slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. U.S. citizens remaining in Lebanon should therefore ensure that they have proper and current documentation at all times. U.S. Legal Permanent Residents should consult with the Department of Homeland Security before they depart the United States to ensure they have proper documentation to re-enter. Further information on the Department's role during emergencies is provided at

http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

¶10. The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security

restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Because of security concerns, unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. Government employees and their family members is discouraged and strictly limited and requires prior approval by the Department of State.

¶11. Americans living or traveling in Lebanon are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Beirut through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs> Americans are strongly encouraged to update their registration information if it is no longer current.

¶12. Travelers arriving at a Lebanese port of entry with an Israeli stamp in their passport may be detained, arrested or refused entry. Penalties are particularly harsh for dual nationals and those of Arab descent. Immigration officers also will refuse entry to anyone who previously entered Lebanon illegally. Travelers with questions about their legal status in Lebanon should contact a Lebanese embassy or consulate in the United States prior to their travel to Lebanon.

¶13. American citizens who come to work in Lebanon should ensure that their Lebanese employer arranges for proper documentation to remain in the country; this includes professional athletes, who should ensure that their sponsoring club/team arranges for them to receive the correct visas valid for the duration of their stay.

¶14. Americans planning to travel between Lebanon and Syria should consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Syria. Americans planning to travel to Syria from Lebanon are strongly advised to obtain a Syrian visa before leaving the United States.

¶15. The Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; however, American citizens who require

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emergency services outside of these hours may contact the Embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209.

¶16. Information on consular services and registration can also be found at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov> or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday and Friday local time. Inquiries may also be sent via email to BeirutACS@state.gov.

¶17. Updated information on travel and security in Lebanon may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>

¶18. Minimize considered.

CLINTON